CULTIVATING A SUSTAINABLE PEACE
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The Problem
Swaziland has the highest HIV prevalence rate in the world, at 26% of the 1.2 million people. HIV has rendered many young people Orphaned and/or Vulnerable Children (OVC): in 2009, UNICEF estimated that almost 10% of the population was OVC, 69% of which were HIV/AIDS cases. I come from Ntabamhloshana, a rural community 20 km outside Manzini, the largest city. Here, many OVCs have had to grow up before their time: head their households; drop out of school, and work below the minimum wage to fend for themselves, their younger siblings, and in some occasions, their dying parents. Some girls have been subjected to prostitution and sexual abuse in their search for food, and life, while for the boys, ‘street-kid’ life, and crime is not uncommon. HIV has created a generation that is not at peace with its existence; a people marginalized and stigmatized, and for whom the next meal is as uncertain as the eradication of HIV itself—a place where peace is like a setting sun that never rises.

In 2002, Pastor Walter Malaza of the local Timbutini Church realized that the gravity of HIV was not limited to his congregation. From church offering and donation boxes in his church, he put together what is now known as Neighbourhood Carepoints. These are areas equipped with kitchens where local women (‘mothers’ to be culturally correct) volunteer to cook for OVC children daily. Children who school pass by the kitchens on their way to and from school, and those who do not school, sustain themselves from here alike. With a large number of HIV positive adults who must have food before taking anti-retroviral medication, the carepoints’ scope of relevance ever widens. There are atleast 10 such carepoints throughout the Ngculwini region of Manzini. Established in 2002, Ntabamhloshana Neighbourhood Carepoint is the oldest, feeding about 200 children daily. Several teams of volunteers from the US spend months every year in these carepoints to mentor, and socially engage with the children. However there is no existing sustainable resource for the carepoints. Pastor Malaza relies on whatever little he gets from his church, and some semi-nutritious food donations from abroad to keep these oases running.

The Solution
A farm!
Pastor Malaza secured sizable arable land for the carepoints, courtesy of the local chief. This project will establish a small farm near Ntabamhloshana carepoint that will produce enough food, and income for the children all year round. By addressing economic strife, inequality, need and lack of motivation, the project seeks to empower a generation and a community that is not only at peace with its existence but also at peace with the world around. The farm will have poultry pens consisting of layer and broiler chickens. Most of the land will be cultivated: between spring and autumn (August - April), for maize, the local staple, which has been under produced in recent years, and for vegetables throughout the year. Depending on the rains, and the supply of water, maize can be grown all year round. Ntabamhloshana residents have to make a trip to town for their food (most of which is imported from South Africa), and in the recent years have often had to scramble for meager World Food Programme food handouts due to poverty. Apart from Ntabamhloshana, there is a growing market for fresh vegetables, and poultry in the nearby Manzini city among street vendors and large retailers. Maize is is constant insatiable demand countrywide!
Providing a sustainable food source for the community, the farm will be self-sustaining and entirely organic, the traditional Swazi way. Fertilizer will be manure from the poultry pens, and cowdung from neighbouring byres. The fields will be ploughed by local ploughmen. Water is drawn from the nearby well, and wastewater from the kitchen will be recycled (by filtration through ash - which is readily available in the kitchens) to be used in the fields and gardens. More (and cleaner) water is rain-harvested in tanks. Building the poultry houses, and vegetable growing will start immediately; crop cultivation will begin with the spring rains in August.

Social Sustainability
People in the area have proven to value projects that will develop their living: in 2007, when Pastor Malaza started building Mgebiseni Primary School to educate orphans free of charge, people volunteered their labour and the school was quickly erected. Countless members of the community are willing to put in time to volunteer at the farm including youth from my church, Pastor Malaza's church, the Jubela Youth Club, all of which are withing walking distance from the carepoint, and during school breaks, the carepoint children. Pastor Malaza will oversee operations to make sure that the farm remains sustainable in all areas, and that it serves its rightful purpose.

Future Prospects
The farm will generate enough food for the children, and the mothers who take care of them at the carepoint, but as an enterprise, it will also serve as a precursor to more of its kind. In the longer term, proceeds from the farm will bring to birth other farms in other carepoints to kickstart a circle of sustainable peace. But the dream, and potential are bigger—a skills center for the mothers, scholarships for the children, and many other projects to improve these precious lives in the long run, and this is only the beginning of a new life for many children in Swaziland.

Personal Inspiration
The children and needy people in question are people I see every day at the community borehole, passed on my way to school, play soccer with on Saturdays—and I realize that, being a double orphan myself, I have been birthed out of the same circumstances, only with acces to opportunity. Last summer, Pastor Malaza, a friend and mentor, drove me through some of the carepoints, and we had lunch with the children at one of the carepoints, and it was not the most nutritious or tastiest of meals, but as one of the mothers noticed, it was a source of life for many children. In matters of help, I had always looked into the far future when I would be all financially established and properly resourced; but attending the United World College in New Mexico birthed a unique idealism--one that appreciates the ability and responsibility of the present self, acknowledging that with all we are, and have, we can presently enrich each other's lives. So that day I had a unique set of eyes with which to see the children: I knew that I had to do something, but most importantly, that I could: I could be a plough that will cultivate a sustainable peace in the land that has given birth to me.
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Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<td>Vegetable Gardening &amp; maintenance</td>
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